

ADDRESS

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OF

HON. ANDREW EWING,

OF TENNESSEE,

TO

HIS CONSTITUENTS.

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1851.

# THE HISTORY OF

## THE CITY OF BOSTON

### FROM 1630 TO 1800

BY

JOHN R. HARRIS

1851



## ADDRESS.

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*To the People of the Eighth Congressional District of  
Tennessee.*

The time has arrived when it is my duty to give you information in regard to my desire for a seat in the thirty-second Congress. The annunciation of my determination on this subject has been delayed to the latest period of my service, with a view to a fair estimation of all the obligations which might then present themselves. It would be a work of supererogation to refer to the circumstances of my election, the dangerous aspect of public affairs at that time, or to give any detailed statement of the measures which have been adopted by the present Congress with a view of allaying agitation and preserving the integrity of the Union. These matters are fresh in your recollection, and the embers of the fires through which we have passed are still glowing red with the heat engendered during the strife of the burning; none of us who were placed in the midst of the furnace can ever forget the flames through which we moved, or the difficulties encountered in preventing a general conflagration. It is not my purpose (as just intimated) to enter upon a particular defence of the compromise, or even a statement of the motives which influenced my vote in favor of its passage. This has been sufficiently accomplished in former addresses, and it is, in my opinion, the interest and policy of the whole country to leave the past, and look steadily towards the future.

I am deeply sensible of some imperfections in the measures finally adopted, and of their failure to give universal satisfaction, but they were, and are, in my opinion, the best which, under all the circumstances, could have been agreed upon, and as they are *the laws of the land*, it is our highest duty, as good citizens, to yield them our hearty support, and sooth, as far as possible, the jealousies and heart-burnings which have severed so many of our fraternal bonds.

The future is full of promise and hope if we are only true to ourselves and to the Constitution; the compromise has afforded a



common basis upon which the national men of all sections of the Union may be rallied. Whilst these slavery issues were open, discord and difference of opinion everywhere prevailed, even amongst the best and ablest men of the Republic, and it was natural that it should be so; the astonishment rather is, that persons nurtured and trained under social and intellectual systems so widely different should ever have harmonized so far as to conclude themselves by any permanent enactment. It has been accomplished, however, and we see the governors, legislatures, &c., of the different States gradually giving in their adhesion to the terms of the adjustment, and recommending to their citizens a faithful adherence to its provisions. This spirit is not universal, and there are, in some localities, evidences of opposition, and desire for repeal; but these are becoming fewer and fainter every day, whilst the decisive votes given at this session of Congress against further agitation, speak volumes in favor of the early accomplishment of their original design. The disposition to evade and hinder the execution of the fugitive slave law, which characterised some of our Eastern cities but a few months since, has been loudly rebuked by the people of the non-slaveholding States, and although there may very probably be some further outrages and riots in these places, still such resistance is fast giving away before the stern decrees of the judiciary and a more enlightened public opinion. Thousands of persons who disagreed to the policy of its enactment will bow before the majesty of the law, and, if it is executed in the proper spirit, finally accede to its propriety and usefulness. The benefit of such a law to the Southern States, so far as the reclamation of fugitive slaves is concerned, may never be very great, for at best the policy and pecuniary advantage of bringing back into our country those who have long resided in a free State is very questionable; but the restraining effect on our slaves of a speedy restoration of those who abscond is very important, and the faithful execution of such a law by our Northern and Eastern brethren will always be a pledge of their adherence to the Constitution, and their love for the Union.

If these measures shall remain the fundamental laws of the land, and be carried out in the spirit of their adoption; if they shall diffuse peace and harmony from the waters of the Atlantic to the Pacific, and permit the great interests of our Republic to



develop themselves under their fostering and genial influence, it will be a sufficient reward to the feeblest instrument of Providence in their passage, and amply repay me for the privations and anxieties suffered during their pendency.

I am fully aware that my course has not been satisfactory to some of my political friends in and out of the District. Some have, for years, deemed me impracticable and imprudent; whilst others, more uncharitable, have thought me selfish and unscrupulous; hence, my share of obloquy and reproach has been greater than ordinarily falls to the lot of so unimportant an individual. I shall be pardoned, therefore, in this closing address, for stating, in brief, the inducement for my course of action during the last few years. Seven years since my mind was brought to the conclusion, then so ably urged by Mr. Calhoun, that the question of slavery was *above all party disputes*, and that if our Union was ever dissolved, it was most probable this bone of contention would be the cause of its dissolution. Differing widely from him in some respects as to the means of avoiding the danger, I nevertheless concurred with him in his apprehensions, and have ever sought steadily to express such views and adopt such a course of action as, in my judgment, would tend to prevent this unfortunate consummation.

When the annexation of Texas was first proposed it received my steadfast opposition, under the fear that it might fatally involve us in another dispute about the boundary of slavery, and thus increase the fuel for abolitionary agitation. This opposition was open and undisguised, although decidedly against the general current of my political feelings and interest. When the Northern Democracy gave in their adhesion to the admission of Texas, and the general sentiment of the country indicated that her annexation was a foregone conclusion; when, furthermore, all the principles of the Democratic Party were to be overthrown by the election of Mr. Clay, I did not hesitate in giving my warm support to Mr. Polk, although differing with him on one great issue involved in the canvass. This is a dilemma in which independent men in a free country must oftentimes be involved, and their only resource is to vote for those with whom they approximate nearest on all the most important matters in issue. In addition to my general agreement with Mr. Polk on political questions, it seemed to me that the vote of the Northern Democracy for the admission



of Texas into the Union made them the natural allies of the South in any dispute which might arise from her annexation, and it was important, in view of this fact, to preserve with them an intimate political connection. If Southern Democrats had lent their aid to the defeat of a Democratic candidate, on the ground of opposition to what was regarded as a measure of Southern policy, it might well have stimulated those malignant feelings of sectionalism which, in later days, have borne such bitter fruits in the North.

In the Spring of 1847, the condition of the war with Mexico indicated the probability of an immense acquisition of territory from her on the conclusion of a peace, and it would become necessary to settle, by the legislation of Congress, the political character of the institutions for this new domain. It had been found impossible to agree upon any form of government for the people of Oregon, because of the dissensions existing in Congress in regard to the propriety of interdicting slavery in the Territorial Bill. Repeated efforts for the adjustment of this vexed question had failed, and now a new element of strife was to be introduced by the acquisition of more territory.

The Presidential contest for 1848 was opening thus under the most disastrous omens in the political horizon. At this dangerous period the name of Gen. Taylor was suggested as a candidate for the Presidency. His political opinions were little known, and it was universally conceded that he had no partizan prejudices or attachments. He was a Southern man; the owner of many slaves; and yet such was his military reputation, and the universal confidence in his patriotism and integrity, that it was very probable he would receive a preponderating vote in the non-slaveholding States. Under this impression the people of different sections of the Union assembled together at various points, and recommended him as their candidate, without reference to his previous political relations. It seemed to me, in view of all our difficulties, that if Gen. Taylor could be elected without any party nomination and without any pledged opposition to the measures of the then existing Administration, he might exercise a most beneficial influence upon the exasperated sectional feelings in existence, and effect much good in calming the waves of party excitement. Under these circumstances, my speech in his favor was delivered at Nashville in the Spring of 1847. It is idle



now to speculate on what might have been the result of an election of Gen. Taylor if his position before the country had remained unchanged. He subsequently wrote such letters as were satisfactory to the Whig Party, and was nominated by their convention. Gen. Cass had been previously nominated as the candidate of the Democratic Party, and the masses on both sides were rallying on the old issues. My support of Gen. Taylor in such a contest would have accomplished no part of my original intention in his nomination, and have been a simple abandonment of my previous political opinions.

When the Democratic Convention assembled at Nashville in 1849, opinions were promulged by some of its members which seemed to me dangerous to the safety of our Confederacy, and calculated to embarrass any future settlement of the slavery issues. These views were embodied in some resolutions that were first submitted to a committee, and subsequently offered in the convention by Gen. Levin H. Coe. Having been a member of the committee, and being a representative on the floor of the convention, it became my duty to give expression to my views on the subject; *they* were freely urged in open session, regardless of personal results. What might have been the effect upon the South and the Union, of our adoption of the two resolutions which were subsequently withdrawn by the mover, cannot now be ascertained; the grave has since closed over him with whom that contest was maintained, and this alone is a sufficient restraint upon me from renewing the investigation.

During my canvass for Congress, and since my election, the principles so long maintained at home have been steadily urged and carried out in my speeches and votes on this subject. With a sincere and ardent desire to protect all the rights and interests of the South, there has been an overwhelming conviction impressed on my mind that this could only be effectually accomplished by a preservation of the Union. With nine-tenths of the civilized world in league against African slavery, and surrounded as we are on this continent by a cordon of non-slaveholding States, it has always seemed to me dangerous, if not ruinous to the interests of the South, to create, by our separation, another free foreign State, more powerful and hostile than those already in existence. Hence my disposition to compromise and arrange



our differences on some basis permanent in its character, and not wholly inconsistent with our rights and honor.

It has not been my intention in this short review of my political career to defend its sagacity or prudence, still less to revive controversies long since terminated. My only object has been to show that my conduct has been the result of deliberate conviction, and not of obstinacy or restless imprudence. A few words more in regard to the allegation of selfishness or demagoguism, and I have done. Every person of the least observation and experience must be aware that true and permanent success in political life can never be attained in this country, except by general, if not unhesitating, acquiescence in the behests of Party. Fugitive and ephemeral triumphs may be achieved under extraordinary circumstances by unreliable party men; but if permanent rewards of office are the main or only inducement for the service of the public, they must be sought by long and undeviating devotion to the interests of the party. If any exemplification of the truth of this fact were necessary, none more eminent could be adduced than that of John C. Calhoun; it stands out as a beacon light to warn the unwary. With a clear and piercing intellect, an unspotted private character, a lofty bearing, and kindly, social, earnest nature, he could not for the last twenty years of his life command the support of his political friends, mainly on the ground of his supposed party unreliability. Upon a theatre where he failed of commanding success, it were useless for any lesser spirit to attempt to win its way.

Fellow Citizens, my mission in politics is closed. Bound to my home by the strongest ties of affection and interest, having many duties and obligations there already undertaken, enjoying but feeble health in the climate of Washington, and having no desire for political advancement, *I am not a candidate for re-election.* This decision may seem to some of my friends an abandonment of their interests; but they will remember, that my consent to a canvass for election was originally obtained with an express understanding, that I was not again to be pressed for the use of my name. Hoping, therefore, that my annunciation may prove satisfactory, and repeating my earnest thanks for your kindly support and confidence during my career,

I am yours, &c.

ANDREW EWING.